

BANTHA



TRACKS

NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICIAL STAR WARS FAN CLUB

WASHINGTON PREMIERE

MAY 17

The first U.S. screening of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* was held at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Screened in a benefit performance for Special Olympics, *EMPIRE* was viewed by more than six hundred area children — many of them Special Olympians. Rather than stage a gala event, George Lucas chose to premiere the exciting continuation of the *STAR WARS* saga for these special children. As Special Olympics President Eunice Kennedy Shriver said: "I cannot think of any group more appropriate than Special Olympians to symbolize the struggle for justice and truth dramatized in the *STAR WARS* epic. In overcoming the challenges they confront every day, Special Olympians give others the same precious prize I believe George Lucas is trying to express in the *STAR WARS* films: faith in the unlimited possibilities of the human spirit."

These children, and the chaperones accompanying them, were treated not only to the film, but also to seeing many of its stars and creators in person. Attending the event were Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Billy Dee Williams, Frank Oz (who performed as Yoda), Kenny Baker, David Prowse, and Peter Mayhew.

Among the film's creators who attended the premiere were director Irvin Kershner, screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan, and producer Gary Kurtz. Local celebrities joining in on the festivities included Ted Kennedy, Amy Carter, Ethel Kennedy, and Eunice Shriver. Two not-so-famous *STAR WARS* enthusiasts managed to obtain seats after sending Mark Hamill a letter indicating their great desire to see the film. Moved by their eloquence, Hamill sent them tickets for the by-then sold-out show. Two other children became celebrities in their own right when they appeared at the screening dressed as Luke and Leia. As she stood signing autographs, the little girl was careful to explain, "I'm not *really* Princess Leia."

Before the screening, a picnic lunch of hot dogs, popcorn, and cotton candy was served to the guests. As the 1100 attendees munched their meal, a local high school band entertained with renditions of themes from *STAR WARS* and *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. Mingling with the crowd, Carrie, Mark, Harrison, Billy Dee, and the other stars of the film met their fans and with unflagging enthusiasm autographed the paper plates handed their way.

As it is everywhere, the film was enthusiastically received. In fact, so great was the excitement that nearly half the dialogue was drowned out with squeals of joy and welcoming applause for each character. But missed dialogue or not, the *EMPIRE* screening and party were events that these children will long remember. ●



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EMPIRE cast members visit with Amy Carter at the Washington, D.C., premiere. From left are Mark Hamill, Frank Oz, Carrie Fisher, Harrison Ford, Amy Carter, Peter Mayhew, Billy Dee Williams and Kenny Baker.



OPENING DAY: WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 1980

HOLLYWOOD

A steady drizzle of rain couldn't keep the fans from lining up outside the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood. They had waited three years for this moment, and weren't about to prolong that wait any longer than necessary — rain or no rain. So, at 9 a.m. on Monday morning, Terri Hardin and her friend Tam Sogioan arrived to buy the first tickets, many hours before they went on sale. Twelve hours later, another dozen fans joined them in line and settled in for the wait. And a long wait it was to be, for THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK would not begin its first public screening until 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday morning, some thirty-nine hours after Terri and Tam first got in line.

As sustenance for those very long hours, many of the fans brought supplies of food and drink. And as entertainment there were cards, portable television sets, guitars, and miscellaneous STAR WARS paraphernalia. Some of the more enthusiastic fans came dressed as their favorite STAR WARS characters, so the lengthening line was dotted with Darth Vaders of all heights, Lukes and Leias of all ages, and an occasional Wookiee scattered here and there.

At last, one hour before EMPIRE was to begin, the tickets went on sale. A cheer went up among the thousand or so people patiently waiting on the rain-drenched sidewalk, and soon the three-block-long line began to file inside the theater.

Just before midnight, after everyone had been seated in the packed theater, the audience began a countdown. The second they reached "zero" the lights dimmed and the credits began to roll — all to thunderous applause. As this first screening of THE EMPIRE got under way, the line waiting on Hollywood Boulevard for the next show was growing. And long before the midnight screening was over, the 2:40 a.m. show had sold out, too.

Although the waiting in line was pretty rough going for some, most fans said that the really hard part had been waiting three years after STAR WARS was released for EMPIRE to come out. By the end of the summer, EMPIRE, the second film in the STAR WARS saga, will be playing in more than 1200 theaters all over the nation. ●



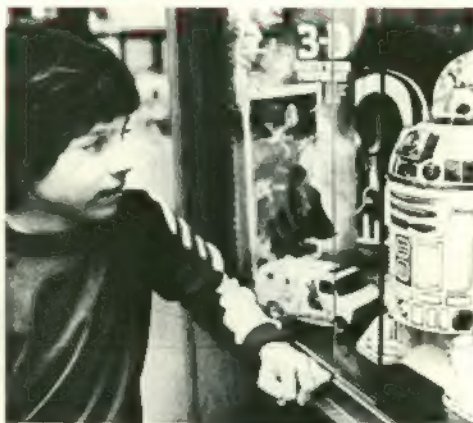
Phil Tippett measures movement of the miniature Tauntaun.

PROFILE JOHN RIOS

John Rios is an unusual Fan Club member. At age ten, he has produced several award-winning drawings. He loves to read books, and says among his favorites is the *Life* nature series. John was even born in the same rural California community as his idol, George Lucas. But none of these things are what make him so unusual.

The youngest member of a family of collectors, John gathers STAR WARS memorabilia. When his collection was exhibited during the month of February 1979, it filled more than four display cases at the Modesto-Stanislaus Library. Things have now reached the point where his mother, Mrs. Marlene Rios, says, "There is STAR WARS all over the house. In fact, everywhere I look there is more STAR WARS!"

John's STAR WARS collection was started when his mother made him a Jawa costume for Halloween 1978. Then Christmas came, and most of John's presents were STAR WARS items. His collection grew quickly, and at last count John had several hundred different items including most of the comics, magazines, and books featuring STAR WARS: a Stormtrooper mask; a realistic Darth Vader costume Mrs. Rios made for Halloween 1979; a Chewbacca doll; the out-of-stock Obi-Wan, Darth Vader, and Chewbacca mugs; and trading cards and card case. But the pride of his collection is a pencil box, a pencil case, an R2-D2 bar of soap, and a remote-controlled R2-D2 — all given to him by the parents of George Lucas.



John Rios with part of his Star Wars collection.

John may not have the world's largest STAR WARS collection, but he may be among the most enthusiastic collectors anywhere. His dream is to take his hobby one step further: Like hundreds of other Fan Club members, John dreams of working on the last film in the STAR WARS saga. Who knows — maybe since George Lucas's dreams came true with STAR WARS and THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, John's dreams may come true, too. May the Force be with you, John.

(In the future we will profile other OSWFC members. If you have a special STAR WARS collection, hobby, or piece of artwork you think would be of interest, please write and let us know something about it.) ●

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

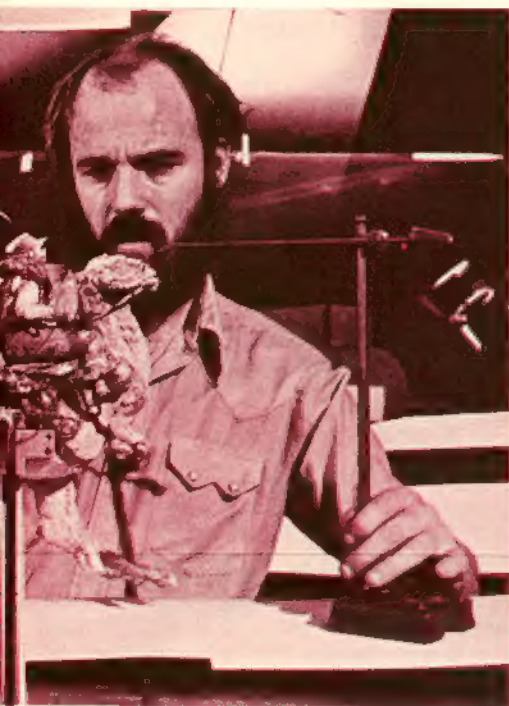
The continuation of the STAR WARS saga marks the beginning of many exciting developments for the Official Star Wars Fan Club. You might have already noticed that our newsletter, BANTHA TRACKS, has a new look and is more informative than ever before. Upcoming newsletter articles will further document the making of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, introduce you to behind-the-scenes people, and provide all kinds of news and information not available elsewhere.

This is also the first opportunity to introduce myself, Ira Friedman, the Fan Club's new Director. Previously, I was the associate publisher of the STARLOG Press. Together with Maureen Garrett, Circulation Manager, and the Fan Club staff, we look forward to making your membership a truly special experience.

Tell us what's on your mind. For instance, if you are not enjoying THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK because your local theater has a faulty sound system or is screening prints of poor quality, send us the details. Are you pleased with the new EMPIRE licensed merchandise? We encourage your feedback and comments. All letters are carefully read and we try to respond to as many as possible. (Please use a self-addressed stamped envelope for letters requiring reply.)

So, help us to help you. And participate in making the Official Star Wars Fan Club an organization through which we can learn, communicate, and have fun!

Ira Friedman, Director



Phil Tippett, who became entranced with animated film at a very early age, has been a stop-motion animator since he was thirteen. A fan of such stop-motion animators as Willis O'Brien (*KING KONG*, original version), Ray Harryhausen (*THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD*), and Jim Danforth (*SEVEN FACES OF DR. LAO*), Tippett at twenty-eight is a veteran in the animation field. His best-known stop-motion work was the fanciful animated chessboard sequence which he and co-worker Jon Berg created for *STAR WARS*. "We had eight figures on that board and used single-frame animation to film them," explains Tippett. "Doing it that way was very difficult because of the large number of figures that had to be moved. We would come in to work at three in the afternoon and be ready to shoot by nine at night. We would then move a leg of one figure, an antenna of another, a claw of another. Then we would take one frame of film. And then the process started all over again. It took forever, and we usually didn't leave until eight the next morning."

Although the use of stop-motion animation in *STAR WARS* was limited to this one sequence, the film's adventure-fantasy style dictated increased use in the saga's next film. According to Jon Berg, "People are interested in *STAR WARS* sort of escapism and with stop-motion there is the opportunity to create things that simply cannot be done any other way."

For that very reason, Berg and Tippett were called upon to do the stop-motion work for *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. The results of their animation efforts are much more extensive than in the first film, and include the sequences involving the snow walkers and the Tauntauns.

The Tauntaun had originally been conceived by George Lucas as a creature looking something like a dinosaur-shaped lizard. As Lucas worked with his artists, the beast

ANIMATING

evolved into a more rodentlike creature and then into one that looked more like a bird. Eventually, the Tauntaun's final design was turned over to Tippett who then evolved the creature seen on the screen—a fur-covered animal that looks something like a llama with horns.

"I sculpted a mock-up of this Tauntaun and sent it to the *STAR WARS* art department in England. There they constructed the full-size, eight-foot-tall model that was used for the close-ups filmed in Norway and at EMI-Elstree Studios. In the meantime, I perfected a twelve-inch Tauntaun model to use for the animation. This version was sculpted in clay and then cast into a very flexible rubber material. We built a steel ball-and-socket skeleton that was put on the inside of the rubber model."

To complete the model, Tippett had to search for just the right type of hair to serve as fur for the miniature Tauntaun since hair too long or too thick would look coarse and unrealistic on the tiny model. Eventually, it was discovered that young calves have very fine and small-napped hair. Feeling that this would be appropriate for the Tauntaun, Tippett obtained some tanned baby calf leather which he transferred to a rubber backing. In this way he created a stretchy rubber skin that could be pulled onto the miniature Tauntaun's form.

With the model built, Tippett had to devise a method of animating it so that its movements seemed realistic. Because the stop-motion process requires filming any particular sequence one frame at a time, it lends a jerky look to the fluid movement of animal puppets like the Tauntaun. However, it can effectively convey the mechanical movement of inanimate creations such as the snow walker. The animator must position his model, shoot one frame of film, move a given part of the model a tiny fraction of an inch, and then shoot another frame. The result is something like a series of still photos flipped very quickly in one's hand.

To add a blurring effect that would lend a more fluid and realistic look to the Tauntaun's running, Tippett constructed a motorized brace that supported the Tauntaun model at the same time that it moved the model slightly forward while each frame was shot. In this way, stop-motion animation (moving the model forward between frames) was combined with motion control (moving the puppet forward as the frames were shot).

By November 1979, the model was completed and was fitted with its motorized brace. By December, some of the first stop-motion sequences with the Tauntaun were filmed. Because stop-motion animation is such an arduous, painstaking task, complete concentration on each fraction of movement is required. To lessen the chances of false or jarring movements, Tippett blocked out each short sequence incorporating the miniature before filming was attempted. Most of the sequences of the Tauntaun running are quite short, taking up not more than two or three seconds of screen time. But, since film is projected at twenty-four frames per second, each three-second sequence could require up to

seventy-two separate changes in the model's position. A sequence that lasts only a few seconds can represent up to eight or ten hours of work; if the animators lost their concentration, thus creating a wrong movement, an entire day's work could be ruined.

Aware of that, cosupervisor of visual effects Richard Edlund and director of photography Dennis Muren tried to create the most comfortable and least distracting environment for the animators. Edlund and Muren made certain that the animators did not need to be concerned with the camera or light set-ups; in that way they could focus their attention completely on their animation. "Stop-motion animators in other situations are generally crowded into a noisy, uncomfortable room," says Edlund. "But since stop-motion is such a specialized and demanding form of animation, concentration is crucial. And for this film, the stop-motion sequences had to look as realistic and convincing as possible, so we made every effort to simplify Phil and Jon's work."

THE TAUNTAUN



An early Tauntaun design by Phil Tippett.

Filming of the stop-motion sequences took place at Industrial Light and Magic, the special-effects facility located in Marin County, California. For these sequences, miniature snowscapes were created on five-foot square tables and matte paintings of sky and snow were used as backdrop. Although filming in miniature is comparable to normal-sized filming, the subtleties in shading and lighting are enormous and must be compensated for by very carefully adjusting lighting and camera f-stops. Because the interior filming on these miniature snowscapes had to match exterior filming done in Norway, it often took Edlund and Muren up to five hours of adjusting the lights before they were able to achieve the match.

The script required the Tauntaun to run in most of its scenes, so the Tauntaun seen most often in *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* is the miniature model created and animated by Phil Tippett. The large movements of the full-size model, filmed in close-up in Norway and England, are made simply by pulling wires attached to its head and eyes. The subtle and complex movement of the Tauntaun seen running in long shot was a result of the many difficult and trying hours Tippett spent in perfecting the look and the motion of this newest addition to the George Lucas bestiary—the Tauntaun. ●

PEN PAL SERVICE

If you are interested in having a pen pal, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Fan Club, being certain to write "Pen Pal" on the outer envelope. If you live outside the United States, include an International Response Coupon.

After we receive your letter we will send you a Pen Pal form. Fill out this form and return it to us. We will then match you up with your optimum pen pal. Each of you will receive a copy of the other's form so you can begin corresponding.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

New and renewing members will receive the EMPIRE kit, which contains a poster, six 8x10 color photos, a decal, other ESB items, and a year's subscription to BANTHA TRACKS.

Membership fees are \$5 (\$6 outside U.S.) for one year; renewals are \$4 (\$5 outside U.S.). Foreign members can insure faster processing of their renewals if they renew with International Bank Drafts or money orders made payable in U.S. currency. It is important that all renewing members return their renewal card with payment. You can renew at any time prior to your renewal date. Please do not send cash.

If you move, remember to send the Fan Club a change of address card listing your old and new addresses as well as your Force number.

If you have friends who might be interested in joining the Fan Club, let us know their names and addresses and we will send them information on how to join.

When writing to the Fan Club, please use a self-addressed stamped envelope to insure quick reply.

EMPIRE TITLES FOR SUMMER AND FALL RELEASE

Coming from Ballantine Books are a number of publications that will be of interest to Fan Club members. These titles include an illustrated version of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK novelization, written by Donald F. Glut. The illustrated edition will include seventy-five drawings by Ralph McQuarrie, many of which are very early conceptual sketches. Also from Ballantine is THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK PORTFOLIO, reproductions of twenty-four production paintings by Ralph McQuarrie. THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK SKETCHBOOK, by Joe Johnston and Nilo Rodis-Jamero, includes many developmental sketches of vehicles, creatures, and characters seen in the film. Available in August will be THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK 1981 CALENDAR. Additional EMPIRE publications include ONCE UPON A GALAXY: A JOURNAL OF THE MAKING OF THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, by Alan Arnold and THE ART OF THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, by Vic Bulluck and Valerie Hoffman. Both of these publications will be available in the fall. THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK NOTEBOOK, not available until December, will include the complete EMPIRE script, selected storyboards, and interviews with the film's director and scriptwriter.

Random House publications available in September will include THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK POP-UP BOOK, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK MIX OR MATCH BOOK, and THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK PUNCH OUT 'N' MAKE IT BOOK. Also on the Random House production schedule is the latest in their Step-Up series for children, THE MAKING OF STAR WARS.

FORD FOR RAIDERS

Harrison Ford has been signed on as the lead in the Lucasfilm Ltd. production of RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK. Ford, best known for his work as Han Solo in STAR WARS and THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, has also appeared in George Lucas's AMERICAN GRAFFITI and Francis Ford Coppola's THE CONVERSATION and APOCALYPSE NOW.

In production this summer, RAIDERS is directed by Steven Spielberg, produced by Frank Marshall, and executive producers George Lucas and Howard Kazanjian. The film is based on a script written by Lawrence Kasdan from an original story by George Lucas and Phil Kaufman.

An action-adventure film set in the 1930s, RAIDERS takes place in a number of exotic locations all over the world and is being filmed on location in Tunisia, Hawaii, France, and at the EMI-Elstree Studios in England.

RAIDERS will be released in the summer of 1981 and will be distributed in the United States by Paramount Pictures.

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- Membership fees are \$5 (\$6 outside U.S.) for one year; renewals are \$4 (\$5 outside U.S.). Mailing address: Star Wars Fan Club, P.O. Box 8905, Universal City, CA 91608.
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